



SAFETY ALERT 04-00

**Seventeenth Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802**

CALL FOR A FREE DOCKSIDE EXAM

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|------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| MSO Anchorage | 271-6725 | MSD Sitka | 966-5454 |
| MSO Valdez | 835-7223 | MSD Ketchikan | 225-4496 |
| MSO Juneau | 463-244 | MSD Kodiak | 486-5918 |
| MSD Dutch Harbor | 581-3466 | MSD Kenai | 283-3292 |

FISHING VESSEL SINKS, 3 CREW SAVED, OFF STIKALIDAK ISLAND, KODIAK, ALASKA

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides timely safety-related information of “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of the Coast Guard’s “Ready for Sea” safety program.

Incident: A 50-ft seiner outfitted for halibut took on water and sank off Kodiak Island in the early morning of March 31st. The vessel was underway in heavy seas and 30-40 knot and maintaining position waiting for the winds to subside with the vessel’s main tank “tanked down”. To keep the circulating pump from freezing up, seawater was permitted to continuously flow to an overboard discharge. The Captain observed the aft one-third of the vessel awash and a crewmember went to the engine room to check the pump and suction valve alignments. One foot of water was observed in the compartment and rising. The vessel’s bilge alarms had failed to sound. Another crewmember located the immersion suits and readied the liferaft. The source of flooding could not be located and the vessel was rapidly losing its stability. The crew donned their immersion suits and launched the liferaft as the Captain notified the Coast Guard on VHF radio of their situation just prior to the vessel capsizing. As the vessel capsized the crew jumped in the water and climbed into the liferaft. The Captain did not have enough time to properly don his immersion suit prior to entering the water resulting in the suit leaking until his son assisted him. Within 45 minutes, a Coast Guard helicopter airlifted the crew to Kodiak. After the rescue the Captain was treated for hypothermia. The vessel sank and the EPIRB floated free when it first capsized transmitting the vessel’s information and position.

Lessons Learned: There are several lessons learned and “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident.

1. Crew training in emergency situations is critical. Conducting drills at the dock and while underway prepare crewmembers for emergency situations.
2. Bilge alarms and pumps give the crew early warning of problems and provided them time to conduct damage control and prevent the vessel’s sinking.
3. If “tanking down”, to ensure stability regularly inspect valves and strainers for proper service and conduct routine, periodic inspections of compartments.
4. Communications were timely and clear. In this case the EPIRB provided critical backup to mark the location of the survivors.
5. Properly fitting and serviced immersion suits save lives. Seawater in immersion suits greatly reduces the survival rate and a person’s ability to maneuver. Practice donning immersion suits.
6. Knowledge of how liferafts operate are key to ensuring they deploy properly. The crew had recently witnessed the servicing of the liferaft and was familiar with its operation.
7. The vessel did not have a current CG dockside exam. These free exams, performed at the dock, help identify safety deficiencies that can lead to loss of vessels and/or their crew.